

# "sky high" by robert lowell essay sample



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Change is a concept that everyone and everything experiences in some form or another, and in particular the consequences of these changes. But first what is change? Collins practical dictionary defines change as: An alteration from an original state, to undergo transition or transformation. Change can bring benevolent and rewarding outcomes through personal growth, however it may also have detrimental and negative effects, and these must be addressed and not overlooked these ideas are evident and extrapolated in the texts Sky High by Hannah Roberts, Looking for Alibrandi by Malina Marchetta and The Grandparents by Robert Lowell. These texts also show that people's outlooks and perspectives are constantly altering and reforming.

As most changes in these texts relate to intangible features of an individual- personality, emotions, outlook and attitudes- the extent of the change cannot be measured in a standard unit. However, the change can be determined in relative terms, and this measure commences with the attributes and attitudes of the individual before the events of change occur. The various techniques employed by the composers have helped shape my understanding of the consequences brought about the universal force that shapes our very existence: change.

Sky High and Looking for Alibrandi both explore the concept that change brings about personal growth and development and is therefore a positive consequence.

In Sky High Roberts change can be viewed as positive. The protagonist has grown up and matured and as a result she is now able to take a mature

sophisticated approach to her childhood. She makes sense of her childhood by writing this poem in which she uses symbolism " Sky High". She wouldn't be able to use these techniques if she wasn't a grown and capable adult. She takes an adult view of her adulthood " tying her to the ground", this is an informed and sophisticated approach to take to her life, as she has grown older she is now more aware. Roberts also changes language throughout the text, which is effective in showing the affects of her growing up. In the beginning of the piece, most of the words are childlike, using alliteration " bird-bitten", metaphor " the best climbing tree in the backyard", and a childish perspective " the air flow[s]... and playfully tousle[s] my hair".

The way that the composer repeats images, at first in a childlike way " shirts like coloured flags in a secret code" and then, remembering and contrasting her perspective as a child, discussing it in a more knowledgeable way as an adult " my own semaphore secrets in colourful t-shirts" shows that time has passed, and that she has grown up. It shows that she has made a positive movement as she can now analytically reflect, she now has these skills. The protagonist is now aware enough to see that ' yes' she's too big now to swing on the clothesline " It's unlikely it could support me now," this shows that she's grown intellectually and is more aware of her surroundings. She now has the skills to reflect and to see how she's changed from a young child to a young woman. She is able to see that time is the catalyst for her transition from childhood to the fast paced world of ' grown ups.' Roberts has effectively shown me that there is a positive side to all change. Similarly in Looking for Alibrandi from growing older Josie has matured and she is now able to reflect and evaluate her experiences.

The movie is set out in a linear structure which allows the reader to see her trials and tribulations as a positive, as they can see the progressive changes which are taking place in Josie's life. She now has the ability to accept her shortcomings, which is a clear indication of her becoming adult in her thinking. As she ages her level of self-awareness and social interaction strengthens her social self esteem. She learns to perceive things better and learns to see the flaws and faults and in her character, we can see this through the use of stream of thought narrative " I've been selfish." This allows me to see things from her perspective thus effectively enhancing my understanding of the benefits of change. Through these texts I now understand that change brings personal growth and development and is therefore a positive step forward in the right direction.

While the previous texts showed that change works out for the better, the poem Grandparents conveys the negative consequences of the process of growing old, shown from the perspective of Lowell. The poem draws comparisons to Sky High and Looking for Alibrandi in that it uses a digressive autobiographical structure to successfully highlight over time the change in the grandparents from being vibrant and very different - " policeman, Mohammedan" to illness " Fatigued elm leaves" and feeling " otherworldly". The grandparents have been left behind; they're stuck in a time warp as a consequence of centuries passing, morals changing, society changing.

They're torn between two worlds: " the ancien regime" and the new. As time passes the more isolated the grandparents become, the less they have in common with the fast paced society. They have being left behind, left to make sense of the turmoil. This is conveyed by the very emotional and

negative tone of the poem " Never again". " They're altogether otherworldly now" shows me that they no longer fit in and they themselves also do not know where they fit in. As time has progressed they've become like vestiges of another world. This text has thoroughly shown me that as you age and things change, the consequences may be harsh and unforgiving.

In the text Sky High the negative aspects of change can also be seen. The reader becomes caught in the freedom and happiness of the young girl who is feeling ' frilly and nearly as pink as the bathers' she was wearing. We are swept along with the euphoria of the moment in which the ' earth spins below' her and she is ' flying'.

However, the story abruptly moves on to the image of an ' older, more age-warped washing line'. This depicts the passage of time since the narrator once soared in her childhood. The image of her hands that have accumulated ' the line-etched story in scars and wrinkles' reinforces in nostalgic tone the sense of ageing. The washing line still stands in the yard, but the child's carefree will and imagination have been transformed in the passing of time. " The inclination is still there...but it is unlikely the washing line could support me this time."

Her adult reckoning intrudes on her reflections of how her life and world have changed. She must accept the responsibilities of adulthood as she is no longer the ' curious onlooker' she once was as a little girl. Now she creates her own ' semaphore of secrets' with the washing she has to hang out.

This story highlights the passage of time and the stages that mark periods of development in our lives. A carefree child is now an adult burdened with

responsibilities and social conventions. She now is being " tied to the ground" because of them. From this text I can conscisley gather that change is not always positive.

Terminal days at Beverly Farms also conveys the negative aspects of change. The reader becomes swept away by the " Bronzed..... oval Lowell smile," and the rich elaborate lifestyle lead by Lowell's father. However through the linear structure we are soon able to see that old Lowell is ill " two coranies", he is on his way to the grave. Through symbolism " uncomfortable boulder" we are able to prominently see the father's predicament. He has gone from catastrophe to catastrophe, failure to failure, as his heart is not truly in any of his jobs. He is just concerned with keeping up appearances " dinner jacket", As he decreases in fortune, he surrounds himself in rich things, to try and keep the veneer of success up. Lowell uses understatement to undermine the hollow life his father leads " I feel awful" are his dying words, understatement is very successful in showing me his hollow life. The neutral tone is effective as it allows the real force of that statement to come through. As time diminishes his father health continues to diminish , he still keeps up his fake hollow smile, he won't admit he's getting older. This allows me to see that the inability to cope with and accept change, will lead to an inability to deal with life. Through various techniques I am now able to comprehend the negative affects of change.

So, through these texts I now realize that it is important to understand that change may also bring about great grievances and hardship and this must not be ignored, you must learn to deal with the affects of change, as this inability to deal with the consequences will lead to a failure to deal with life.

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As a consequence of change people's outlook and perspectives change. In the texts Looking for Alibrandi Josie's outlooks on herself, family, culture and friends all undergo major alteration. " There have been a few changes, including how I feel about people and things." Through the use of linear structure it ensures the continuity of the film. We can see Josie's changing interaction with the characters and how her perspectives change from one scene to the next. This approach allows the author to get inside other characters ' perspective' and enables Josie to demonstrate, her growing awareness of personal identity. Through the use of stream of thought it allows me to empathise with Josie, and I can put myself in her situation which allows me to understand her reactions to change. Cultural identity is a prevalent part of Josie's life. Initially she rebels against it. However as the year unfolds she begins to realize that her ethnic traditions such as tomato day are a positive. She sees that " you can't escape it"

She is also subject to racial discrimination at school. She often reverts to physical abuse in response to wog comments. However as time passes she realizes that she too is capable of the same sin. " The difference between my ancestors and yours..... is that mine didn't have chains on their feet."

While she complains about the limitations of her culture she reluctantly admits that she cannot hate something that she can't escape " she is a part of it." She begins to see the faults in flaws in her character and develops the skill to rectify them " I've been lazy, I've been selfish." As the movie progresses she begins to see life more honestly and rationally.

Through this linear structure, and stream of thought I it is very clear to me how Josie's perspectives change.

Similarly in Grandparents the poet also has a shift in perspectives. We can see this change in perspectives through the imploring tone. At first he sees the passing of his grandparents as a time of great liberation and a sense of excitement, at the prospect of the " Farm's my own!" However this feeling is soon replaced with a sense of loneliness and isolation " Back there alone." And Lowell soon looks upon his life as pointless " I spoil another season," and he becomes deeply saddened by the loss of his grandparents " Never again to walk there." He even plays " O summer time" to remind himself of the past, and he hasn't removed the " coffee stain" as he wants to be reminded of those times he shared with his grandparents. The tone then shifts to one of nostalgia " insist on shooting for us both", by shifting tones I can see his sense of loss, and it allows me to emphasise with him. Even though he's an adult he is still crying, " tears smut my fingers" and reminiscing powerfully. He is using the past to make sense of the present. We can also see how the poets understanding of his grandparents has changed from child " doodle handlebar moustaches." To an adult perspective " have me hold me cherish me", this change is quite marked and obvious to see.

Terminal days at Beverley farms like Grandparents also allows me to see how people's perspectives change. When Lowell's father is in the navy, Lowell idolizes his father and admires him for doing what he loves. This poems draws parallels to Grandparents as we can see how Lowell's tone changes through the use of linear structure. The tone is neutral which shows that Lowell's relationship with his father is now very distant, he refers to him as " father" instead of daddy. The title is almost as if Lowell is just observing what he's seeing, there is a neutrality of emotion. Lowell has completely



detached himself from his father. He now looks upon his father as a fake, as a man who leads a shallow hollow life of "repetitive smiling" to hide his failure.

This may also be seen as an indication that people's perceptions are constantly altering even after adulthood. As a consequence of various changes in peoples lives it often brings about a marked change in their perspectives.

We may conclude that the above texts have an array of responses and consequences to the process of change. These may be positive, however it is important to realize that they may also be negative. But what they convey in common is a complex sense of process, which involves some sort of struggle through time, and in the end they will be inevitably have changed, as a consequence. This may be a change in perceptions and perspectives. This is how I my understanding of the consequences of change had been influenced by the various techniques of the composer.